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Improving Academic Learning and Success Through Transparency: A Student's Perspective

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Improving Academic Learning and Success Through Transparency: A Student's Perspective

Christina Ouellette, Graduate Assistant, Joanna Boeing Bratton, Assistant Director, Ruth Slotnick, Director, Office of Assessment, Bridgewater State University

BSU Institutional Profile

- **Mission:** Comprehensive teaching university of Southeastern Massachusetts using its resources to support and advance the economic and cultural life of the region and the state
- **Enrollment:** 9,500 undergraduate/1,400 graduate students
- **Degrees:** 97 academic degrees offered

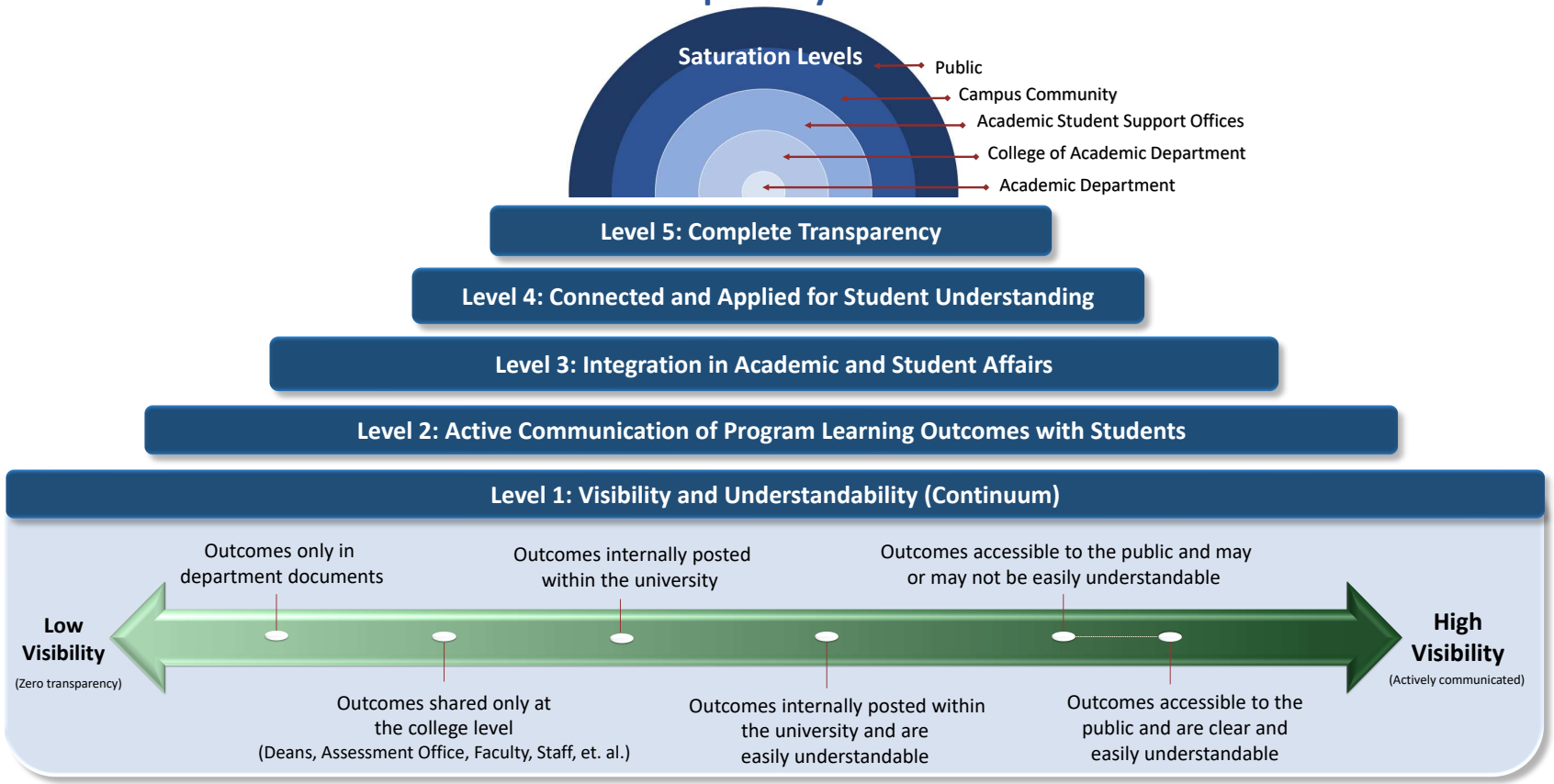
Purpose of the Transparency Project

- The BSU Transparency Project is led by the Graduate Assistant in the Office of Assessment
- Aims to make all program learning outcomes easily visible and understandable to current and prospective faculty, staff, and students
- Vital for students' understanding of their academic learning and success
- National calls for transparency by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment and the Association of American Colleges and Universities
- Required evidence of transparency of student learning outcomes by NECHE

Project Research Methods

- Conducted two sets of semi-structured interviews with college deans (n=8) in spring and fall of 2019
- Comparative analysis of interview transcripts
- Validated emerging themes with assessment colleagues
- Review of the literature on transparency of learning outcomes
- Field notes, including lived experiences as a BSU graduate and undergraduate student

BSU's Transparency Framework



Identified Barriers to Transparency of Learning Outcomes at BSU

Academic Freedom
Prevents assigned incorporation of transparency into course material and structure; need faculty buy-in

Limited Institutional Procedures
Lack of campus-wide guidelines on visibility at BSU pertaining to program learning outcomes

Perceived Lack of Value for Students
Perceptions by faculty, deans, and staff that learning outcomes have little or no value for students

Uncertainty about who has Influence
Misunderstandings about who has influence in making learning outcomes visible

Assessment Jargon
Assessment vocabulary and practices may be confusing, feel disconnected from teaching, or simply unfamiliar